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Letter to the Editor

Response to the Wall Street Journal Editorial "The Acorn 75"

By Congressman Barney Frank

The recent editorial by the Wall Street Journal is a great example of how to give a very false impression by selective truth-telling.

The editorial is written to lead people to believe that I deliberately missed the vote on cutting off funds for ACORN. It does this by presenting two facts: first, that I did not vote on the motion to defund ACORN; and second, that I had been on the house floor for thirty minutes before that vote was taken.

What the writer did was deliberately to omit two other facts, because their inclusion would have invalidated the thesis.

The most important omitted fact is that my reason for being absent at the time of the ACORN vote was that I was entering the White House to attend a solemn and important ceremony in which the president conferred the Medal of Honor posthumously on a young man who had lived in my district who was killed in combat in Afghanistan. I did not think that, as a member of Congress who had voted to send Jared Monti to the war in Afghanistan in which he was killed, and in whose district he had lived, that anything could keep me from attending the ceremony at which his parents received the medal.

The other omitted fact is that I missed not only the vote on ACORN, but the vote on passing the student loan bill which came after that vote. The sequence is this: The White House set the time for the awarding of the Medal of Honor for 2:00 pm on Thursday. A series of votes on the education loan bill began at about 1:00 o'clock. I stayed for as many of them as I could, but at twenty minutes to 2:00 pm, with ten minutes of debate about to begin on the Republican re-committal motion before the next vote, I had to choose between missing the last two votes or barging into the Medal of Honor ceremony late. I chose to miss the votes.

And if the explanation for the Journal's using my attendance at this ceremony as the basis for criticism is that they did not know this was the reason, that was entirely the fault of the writer who made no effort to contact my office to find out why I was absent.

BARNEY FRANK